

155. RHINOPTILUS CHALCOPHTERUS.

Rhinoptilus chalcophterus (Temm.); Shelley, B. Afr. i. p. 195, no. 2523.

Cursorius chalcophterus, Shelley, Ibis, 1894, pp. 25, 474.
Nyika Hills, 4000 feet, June. A female.

XL.—*Birds'-nesting in and around Lucknow. Additional Notes taken in the Season of 1896.* By WILLIAM JESSE.

SINCE writing my former article, which appeared in 'The Ibis,' 1896, pp. 185-198, I have found several species breeding near Lucknow which are not mentioned in that list. In my later labours I have been most materially helped by Mr. P. J. Lucas of this station, who not only takes a great personal interest in ornithology, but possesses a very intimate acquaintance with the language and customs of the natives. By his help I have been able to get the villagers to keep a look-out for nests and to bring in word, and I have thus obtained the eggs of several birds which I had previously sought in vain.

AQUILA VINDHIANA (Franklin). Indian Tawny Eagle.

Hind. [*Lucknow*]: Wokháb.

This Eagle is common in Lucknow, and may often be seen mingling with the Kites and Vultures over the busiest parts of the city. Europeans here call it the Lugger, while the true Lugger is named the Pigeon-Hawk.

In the month of January I saw two nests of this bird, both at the very top of tall mango-trees on the outskirts of the station. One contained two eggs on the point of hatching, the other a half-fledged young one. The eggs are similar to those of the House-Kite (*Milvus forinda*), but are of course much larger.

The Wokháb makes a large nest of sticks, and lines it with leaves. It is placed at the extreme tip of some large branch, and not in a thick fork, as is the case with Kites.

HALIAËTUS LEUCORYPHUS (Blyth). Pallas's Fishing Eagle.
Hind. [*Lucknow*]: Báç, Dhenk.

Though not seen often in Lucknow itself, this fine Eagle breeds all over the Division from October to February, though most eggs are taken in November and December. The nest is an immense irregular structure of sticks, lined with leaves. It is in most cases placed in some high fork of a pipal-tree, near a jheel. The first I found was on Nov. 1st, but was empty, though the bird was sitting by it. The shikari was sent out to the place later, and brought in three fresh eggs on Nov. 23rd. These are greenish white, very faintly marked with brown. In the early part of January, Mr. Lucas brought in two more similarly marked fresh eggs.

LIOPICUS MAHRATTENSIS (Bonap.). Yellow-fronted Pied Woodpecker.

Mr. William Harper showed me a nest-hole in a tree in the compound of Messrs. Peake, Allen, and Co., chemists, from which he had taken three half-fledged young birds. These were placed in a cage and left out of doors during the day, and the parent birds visited them regularly and brought them food. Unfortunately the cage was placed in the sun by a careless servant and two of the brood died, but the third survived and was, when I saw it, in a most flourishing condition.

TACHORNIS BATASSIENSIS (Hartert). Palm-Swift.

On March 31st I observed several pairs breeding in the fan-palms in the Wingfield Park; and a few days later I saw some more in the Horticultural Gardens. Probably they had eggs, but, so far as I was concerned, the nests were quite inaccessible. This Swift does not appear to leave the neighbourhood of its favourite tree; at all events, I have not noticed the bird anywhere else in the station.

HIEROCOCCYX VARIUS (Horsf.). Common Hawk-Cuckoo.

Hind. [*Lucknow*]: Popíya.

On March 21st I took a nest of *Argya malcolmi* containing four eggs. Three of these were precisely similar in

shape, size, and shade of blue and were fresh; the fourth was considerably smaller, oval in shape, and of a much darker shade of colour, which was not lost on blowing; moreover this egg was hard-set. I cannot, of course, vouch for the egg, but its general appearance tends to point it out as parasitic. The Hawk-Cuckoos, or Brain-fever Birds as they are called here, had been "calling" for some weeks past, and hence I believe the egg to have belonged to this species. The other common Cuckoo, which lays a blue egg, is the Pied Crested Cuckoo (*Coccyzus jacobinus*), and it does not put in an appearance till June, after the "rains" have commenced.

PALÆORNIS CYANOCEPHALUS (Wagl.). Western Blossom-headed Parroquet.

Hind. [*Lucknow*]: Lal Tota.

Not nearly so numerous as *P. torquatus*, but it seems to be a permanent resident and to breed here. I saw numerous young in all stages in the city "Bird Market" at the end of March.

ARGYA MALCOLMI (Hume). Large Grey Babbler.

Hind. [*Lucknow*]: Bhaina.

This Babbler, which, strangely, I overlooked the previous season, is very common. I took its eggs from March to June. The nest is a much more straggling structure even than that of *Crateropus canorus*, and as often as not there is no attempt at concealment. Even in the breeding-season Babblers are very gregarious, although they do not nest in company. They are birds of weak flight, going only a short distance at a time, and doubtless they congregate together, feeling that there is safety in numbers.

LANIUS LAHTORA (Blyth). Indian Grey Shrike.

I found a nest containing two nearly fledged young in a babool-tree on July 11th, 1896. I have seen the eggs brought in several times, and the species seems to breed here from March till August.

Since writing the above, I have found a nest and four nearly fresh eggs of this species in a babool-tree on April

26th, 1897. And again, near the same spot as the above, another nest containing four fresh eggs, May 9th, 1897.

LANIUS VITTATUS, Valenciennes. Bay-backed Shrike.

This very handsome little Shrike appears to be somewhat locally distributed, being fairly common in certain spots and absent in others. It breeds from March to August, and I found several nests last year during that period. The nest is very pretty, made of grass and twigs, and lined with rags, wool, and hair. It is generally placed in a babool or in the so-called "cork"-tree, at a height varying from 10 to 20 feet from the ground. The largest number of eggs I have found is five; they are of the usual Shrike type and rather round in shape.

GRAUCALUS MACÆI (Less.). Large Cuckoo-Shrike.

This species is very generally distributed all over the Division, breeding apparently from March to the end of July. The only two nests I have seen were placed at the extreme tip of the branch, and were with difficulty discovered and reached. Both were small shallow cups made of twigs, slightly lined with wool and hair. One nest contained two eggs, which I am told is the usual number; the other was empty and the birds deserted without laying. These were both found in March. On June 29th I saw one of these birds fly across the road with a twig in its mouth. I was driving at the time and could not stop, and, though I went next day and searched very carefully, I could not find the nest. The European and Eurasian boys of Lucknow call this bird the "Tree-Plover" and the "Rain-bird,"—why, I do not know; and my pupils failed to recognize it as belonging to the Shrikes until I had pointed out its distinguishing characteristics.

TEMENUCHUS PAGODARUM (Horsf.). Black-headed Myna.
Hind. [*Lucknow*]: Pawái.

I observed several pairs during the season, but the only nest I saw was in a hole in a mango-tree and it contained half-fledged young on June 28th.

PLOCEUS BAYA (Blyth). Weaver-bird.

Hind. [*Lucknow*]: Baya.

A very curious nest of this species was brought to me by Mr. Lucas in the first week in October. This nest, or rather collection of nests, is composed of seven distinct egg-cavities placed one below the other. The different chambers appear to have been added year by year; the lowest only was composed of the season's grass, the material of the others getting older and older, the top one being so old that it seemed a wonder that it had not come to pieces with the weight of the lower stories. Three out of the seven chambers were in actual use, containing two, three, and three eggs respectively. Though I have seen hundreds of these nests, this is the first time I have noticed anything like the above.

PYRRHULAUDA GRISEA (Blyth). Ashy-crowned Finch-Lark.

Very numerous all over the wide sandy plains. I found several of its nests in March and April, and Mr. Lucas took their eggs again in September and October. The nest is a neat little cup placed in a hole or inequality in the ground, often under a plant or bush; it is, however, very loosely put together and has little or no lining. The number of eggs appears never to exceed two. This Lark always rises at once on being flushed and does not run a little way first, like most other species; hence its nest, which in ordinary cases would with difficulty be found, is discovered with comparative ease.

TURTUR CAMBAIENSIS (Gmelin). Brown Turtle-Dove.

Hind. [*Lucknow*]: Pindak; Pirki.

For a long time I was under the impression that this species was either wanting or rare around Lucknow, but I have since discovered that it is common enough in certain parts of the station. The four Doves, *T. cambaiensis*, *T. suratensis*, *T. humilis*, and *T. risorius*, appear to keep more or less to different localities. *T. suratensis* is the commonest Dove, making its nest in the verandas of houses as well as in bushes; *T. humilis* is especially partial to babool-

trees; *T. risorius* chiefly inhabits the mango-topes. In the north-eastern quarter of Lucknow *T. cambaiensis* is very common, and seems, in a great measure, to replace *T. suratensis*. In the early mornings all four species will be found feeding together in the fields. I took my first nest of *T. cambaiensis* on March 28th. It was placed in a tangle of grass amongst the lower branches of a babool-tree about 2 feet from the ground. I shot the hen, which, falling close to another tree a little further on, startled a *T. risorius* from her nest and two eggs, and shortly after I got a nest of *T. suratensis*. I have never taken the eggs of *T. humilis* before the month of June.

In Lucknow itself most people call all Doves "Pindak" or "Pirki" without distinction, but in the district the large Doves, e. g. *T. risorius* and *T. meena*, are called "Fachta," the small Doves "Pirki"; Blue Rock-Pigeons are named "Khabúta," and the Green Pigeon "Hurrial."

PTEROCLES EXUSTUS (Temm.). Common Sand-Grouse.

This bird occurs locally around Lucknow, but not, I believe, in any great numbers. On June 14th, when out black-buck shooting with Messrs. P. S. Lucas and H. Fisher, the horse of the former put up a bird. Riding behind, I marked the spot, and on going up to it found a nest with three eggs. As we did not know the parentage of the eggs, it was necessary to shoot the bird, a matter of some difficulty as we had no shot-guns. However, the old bird kept flying round, finally settling some distance off, and at his second shot with the Winchester rifle Lucas bowled it over. It proved to be a hen, but we were unable to preserve it as it was so badly damaged and, moreover, became putrid before we reached home. Shortly after we came across some more Sand-Grouse and Lucas shot another, which this time turned out to be a cock. The nest was a circular hollow in the sand under a tuft of grass. It was lined with a few bits of grass and three feathers. The three eggs were oval in shape; in colour they were stone, richly marked and mottled with brown and purple.

LOBIPLUVIA MALABARICA (Bodd.). Yellow-wattled Lapwing.

Hind. [Lucknow]: Titiri.

This bird breeds locally from April to June on what are known here as "usar maidans," that is, barren sandy plains with stones and tufts of grass here and there. I have had the eggs brought me on various dates in May and as late as the 6th June: May is, I think, *the* month with this bird. For a long time I was not quite sure of the authenticity of these eggs, though I could not think of any other species to which they might belong. On May 30th of this year, however, we started a Lapwing off four eggs. Though we were unable to secure the parent, owing to the high wind, which prevented great accuracy with the rook-rifle, yet I have no doubt about these eggs. I managed to get within fifteen or twenty yards of the bird as it stood on a hillock, and examined it carefully. The nest was a hole scraped in the sand, the edge being fringed, as are the nests of the Red-wattled Lapwing, with bits of earth and kunker. There was of course no lining. Though not nearly so common as *L. goensis*, I think it is scarcely so rare here as many people seem to imagine.

GRUS ANTIGONE (Linn.). Sarus Crane.

Hind. Sárás.

Owing to the absence of any large jheels, this bird does not breed in the immediate vicinity of Lucknow. Lucas took a nest near Aturia, on the line between Lucknow and Sitapur, on Oct. 3rd. On Aug. 16th, as I was travelling to the "Hills," I saw two nests near Hardoi. The old Sarus was sitting on one, but the other was in process of construction, and it was very interesting to watch the bird pulling up with its bill the wet weeds and piling them into a great heap. Although the railway-line passed close to it, it took no notice of the train, and when I last looked it was still busy with its task, supremely indifferent to all external affairs.

HYDROPHASIANUS CHIRURGUS (Scop.). Pheasant-tailed Jacana.

This bird breeds all over Oudh and the North-west Provinces wherever there is sufficient water. We had numerous eggs brought to us in July and August, but the only date on which we took them ourselves was August 2nd. The eggs of this species are most characteristic and cannot be mistaken. They are peg-top in shape, of a beautiful bronze-green or brown in colour, and very highly polished.

CICONIA LEUCOCEPHALA (Gmelin). White-necked Stork.

Hind. [*Lucknow*]: Núhri.

On July 26th the shikari Dwarka brought in four white eggs, which he declared belonged to this species. They were taken from a large nest of sticks in a pipal-tree. Unfortunately he did not succeed in getting the parent birds, a most necessary precaution in all cases of identity where natives are concerned; but in this instance I feel pretty sure that the eggs are genuine. The species is common in Oudh and remains all the year round.

ARDEA COROMANDA (Bodd.). Cattle-Egret.

Hind. [*Lucknow*]: Lal Bogla.

ARDEA INTERMEDIA (Wagler). Lesser White Egret.

Hind. [*Lucknow*]: Sufaed Bogla.

On July 19th Lucas and myself were out in the district on the search for black-buck, when we were met by one of our egg-hunters, to say that he had found a nesting-place of several sorts of Bogla, and forthwith he led us to a village in which were two large trees—a pipal and a tamarind, on which he informed us the birds were breeding. The leaves and branches were very thick, and for the first few moments we could see nothing except a solitary Paddy-bird (*Ardeola grayi*). We were just making up our minds for a disappointment when we espied a Cattle-Egret sitting on its nest and promptly shot it for purposes of identification. At the report of the gun the two trees, which up to this time had

been perfectly still and silent, suddenly sprang to life and the air was filled with Cattle- and White Egrets circling round in all directions, the buff and snowy whiteness of the plumes showing up beautifully in the sunshine. We soon had a fine series of eggs, though we did not take one-quarter the number we might have done. Those of *A. coromanda* are of so light a blue as to be almost white, but those of *A. intermedia* are much darker and resemble the eggs of *A. cinerea*. To make sure that we were assigning the respective eggs to the right parents, we shot a specimen or two of each species on its nest. The nests of the Egret were made of sticks lined with leaves, and were much more cup-shaped than those of the Paddy-bird. We met a birdcatcher who had in his possession a White Egret with its eyes sewn up. This he informed us was a decoy-bird, and that when he had managed to secure any birds in breeding-plumage he plucked out the plumes and released the captives. Doubtless this must be uncomfortable for the Egret, to say the least of it; but it struck me that if it is absolutely necessary to have Egret's feathers, it is a better way of obtaining them than that which has resulted in the wholesale destruction of one of the most beautiful of the feathered race.

PODICIPES MINOR (Linnæus). Little Grebe.

Hind. [*Lucknow*]: Dhub-Dhub.

This species, though I have not seen it in Lucknow itself, is very common on the tanks and jheels in the district. On August 2nd we got three nests containing five, four, and one egg respectively. The nests were the usual floating mass of dead and decaying weed. The five eggs in one nest were stained a deep chocolate-red, which only partially disappeared on washing. Other nests were brought to us containing six eggs. It is very difficult to watch these little birds on their nests; they slip into the water noiselessly the moment they suspect danger, and hide away among the reeds.